



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CRITICAL NOTES.

INTUITIONAL CRITICISM.

THE article in the April number of the *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY* on "The Transfiguration Story" is an interesting specimen of what may be called intuitional criticism. It settles matters by the decisive method of seeing just what must have been the facts in apostolic times, and formulating the results in vigorous and positive affirmations. There is some show of reasoning and adducing evidence—just enough to satisfy the prejudices of those who still think something of that sort to be necessary; but in the main it is the deliverance of one who enjoys the faculty of critical second sight. A few illustrations may be given.

We are told that Paul's visions were "due to a peculiar nervous temperament" (p. 241). We have so little information in the New Testament about Paul's nervous system that one naturally wonders what the evidence can be. Strictly speaking, none is given. Reference is made to 2 Cor. 12:7, where Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is spoken of; and apparently we are expected to infer that this is a figurative reference to a "peculiar nervous temperament." But inasmuch as Paul distinctly intimates that the thorn was sent *after* "the exceeding greatness of the revelations," we can hardly be expected to be much impressed by this evidence. Clearly our conviction of the truth of the proposition must rest on the intuition of the writer. For he himself evidently has a "peculiar nervous temperament" from which "visions" proceed, enabling him to see distinctly and directly what Paul's mental processes were.

Respecting the visions of Joseph and of the magi, of Zacharias, of Mary, and of the shepherds, we are told that they "are not the record of pathological facts, but literary expressions for religious ideas" (p. 242). Here no show of evidence is adduced beyond the declaration itself. We are to trust the intuition implicitly.

Similarly it is declared that the "two anointed ones" of Zech. 14:4 were understood by the early Christians as referring to the "two prophet-witnesses of Messiah," so that, when Jesus was seen with two "glorified ones," these were "perceived at once" to be no other than

those mentioned by Zechariah (p. 255). Inasmuch as there is not a particle of historical or exegetical basis for this statement, it is in this case strikingly obvious that we are indebted for the information wholly to the authoritative vision vouchsafed to the writer of the article.

To come nearer the heart of the essay, the narrative of the transfiguration is declared to be unhistorical. No distinct reason is given for the affirmation. Stress is indeed laid on the fact that the narrative embodies the same didactic contents as the preceding account of Peter's confession. But it is not clear how this is any evidence of the apocryphalness of either story. If the two accounts *disagreed* with one another, there would be some plausibility in thinking that one or the other must be discredited. It is true, some critics find both agreement and disagreement to be evidence of spuriousness. Thus, it is said, John could not have written both the fourth gospel and the Revelation, because they are so unlike; and Paul could not have written the epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, because they are so much alike. But our author does not distinctly adopt this as a canon of criticism, and doubtless it would be more fair to him to assume that he rests his case chiefly, if not wholly, on the clearness of the intuition by which he is enabled authoritatively to declare that no transfiguration took place at all.

Although the main topic is the transfiguration story, our author's peculiar nervous temperament has furnished him with a vision respecting the stories about Peter and Cornelius in Acts, chap. 10. We read (p. 243):

We have here more than the inherent improbability of two mutually unknown and widely separated nervous temperaments working in conjunction, to convince us that the vision is fictitious. A separate version of the same event (the emancipation of Peter from his Jewish scruples about eating with converted gentiles), in plain prose, from the hand of Paul himself, Gal. 2:11-21, absolutely establishes the fact.

Here, indeed, we *seem* to have something like reasoning from historic evidence. Paul is set over against Luke, and Paul's testimony seems to be accepted as decisive. But we soon find that it is so only in appearance. Not merely does the essayist calmly set aside the current notion that the coincidence between the visions of Peter and Cornelius was owing to a supernatural influence, but we find him afterward setting aside the very evidence which he so triumphantly adduces. Paul's account in Gal., chap. 2, he tells us, shows that Paul was the one who overcame Peter's scruples about eating with converted gentiles. But

Paul's account shows us just the opposite. It tells us that, before the coming of the men from Jerusalem, Peter "did eat with the gentiles" — from which it is evident that Peter had already been emancipated from his Jewish scruples on this subject. The "plain prose" tells us that what Paul rebuked him for was his drawing back from his previous practice—in other words, his weakness in not consistently and persistently making his practice conform to the emancipation which had already taken place.

But our author knows the facts much better than this. His reference to Paul's testimony seems to have been made only as a concession to the weakness of those men who are always asking for a proof—like the Jews who were always asking for a sign. The really conclusive factor in the settlement of the problem is not what Paul says, but what the seer by his intuition sees. He *knows* that Peter was converted from his prejudices by Paul at Antioch. The fact that Paul seems to say just the opposite only shows that he was unfortunate in his use of language, and did not say what he meant to say or ought to have said. It is much more satisfactory to have a clairvoyant who can see infallibly and immediately from the twentieth century to the first, and from Connecticut to Antioch, than to depend for our information on an old manuscript written in bad Greek, which may or may not represent what Paul actually said.

If anyone imagines that our author cannot really intend to contradict the very authority on which he professedly relies, one needs only to read this declaration found on p. 244:

It is psychologically inconceivable . . . that Peter, acting under what he regarded as special divine revelation, should not only have converted and baptized a company of gentiles (10: 24, 45-48), but eaten with them (10: 48; 11: 3); then been taken to task for it by "them that were of the circumcision" . . . , with the result of triumphant vindication of his course . . . ; and thereafter at Antioch, in spite of the example of Paul and the support of a considerable element of gentile believers, been so overawed by the influence of "certain from James" as inconsistently to withdraw from his eating with the gentiles, desert their cause, and force upon Paul, single-handed, the long battle for their equal rights in the church.

Now, whether or not our seer's intuitions are correct with regard to the narrative in Acts, chap. 10, it is certain that, according to Paul, Peter's scruples had *somehow* been overcome before the rebuke was administered to him by Paul; and it is certain that they could have been overcome only by some evidence that they were contrary to the divine will. In either case, therefore, according to the passage just quoted,

it is psychologically *inconceivable* that Peter could have done what Paul *says that he did do*. Peter is thus relieved of his reputation for cowardice; but it is done at the expense of Paul's reputation for veracity. Probably we shall soon be told that the story of Peter's denial of Christ is fictitious. For the article under consideration lays stress on the importance of Peter's confession of Jesus' messiahship at Cæsarea Philippi; and it is intrinsically more improbable that a short time afterward Peter could have denied all knowledge of Jesus, than that he could have behaved as he is alleged to have done at Antioch. To be sure, the Christian world has, in general, never found any difficulty in believing the story of the denial, and has even found it to be quite in accordance with the working of imperfectly sanctified human nature in all generations; but that will not prevent its being discovered to be psychologically inconceivable that the story can be true. This argument from psychological inconceivability is a very convenient and effective one. I remember once hearing a German theological student emphatically affirm that it was psychologically inconceivable that the mother of Jesus could have had any other children to bring up. How much easier to settle that vexed question in this way than to bother with the various Marys and Jameses and reach no certain result after all!

And so at last it comes to this: All the various accessible witnesses to the facts of the history of the early Christian church are found to be untrustworthy. They agree with one another too much, or they disagree with one another too much; and in either case they come into collision with the psychological make-up of the critical scholar. Accordingly the only satisfactory way of getting at the facts of early Christian history seems to be to trust entirely to the intuitions of the modern seer.

C. M. MEAD.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

HISTORICAL CRITICISM OF JER. 1:4-19.

1. *Jeremiah's prophetic call, 1:4-10.*—The correctness of the date given both in 1:3 and 25:3 as the thirteenth year of Josiah, *i. e.*, 627-6 B. C., admits of no doubt and is challenged, as far as I know, by nobody. The purpose of the story of Jeremiah's call is the vindication of the prophet's divine authority. Just as Amos told the priest at Bethel that he had been sent directly by Yahweh, and that he did not by any means belong to the professional prophets, so Jeremiah narrates here that he has not sought the prophetic office for himself, but has been compelled